

AROUND THE FORT

Tech-savvy troops

Army Signal Corps transforming to meet needs of latest generation of soldiers, general says

By Mollie Miller
Fort Hood Herald

Soldiers coming into the Army are no longer the technology novices they once were, and the training they receive needs to reflect their experience level, a top signal corps officer said Friday.

"The school house is changing to meet how young people now learn," said Brig. Gen. Ronald M. Bouchard. "We are trying to take advantage of all the new education techniques that are out there."

Bouchard, the deputy commander of the U.S. Army Signal Center and Fort Gordon, Ga., visited Fort Hood last week to offer soldiers from the post's 3rd Signal Brigade information on the Signal Corps' latest education initiative, LandWarNet University.

"Nearly every school out there has distance learning programs or virtual classrooms," Bouchard said. "This mirrors those capabilities."

The Army will use LandWarNet

University to educate and train soldiers in technical communications skills, including network operations through online courses, Bouchard said. The goals include developing and educating leaders, providing opportunities for lifelong learning and integrating combat development and research objectives quickly.

The \$30 million Net-based training program is scheduled to be launched April 15.

"Nearly everybody out there is taking some type of course online and we want to capitalize on that," Bouchard said. "We don't have to have to bring (the soldiers) back to the school house if we don't have to."

Bouchard said LandWarNet University will help reduce the amount of time soldiers have to spend at Fort Gordon and increase the time they have with their unit and families at their home station.

"We need to be able to go to the soldiers," Bouchard said. "This will provide

training to the soldier when and where needed."

The Signal Corps has no immediate plans to go to 100 percent distance education, Bouchard said. Although he would not speculate on how much of the corps education would remain physically at the schoolhouse, Bouchard said there are certain subjects that still will be taught in a classroom environment at Fort Gordon.

"There is Army-unique equipment that we want to make sure soldiers have actually touched and are certified on," he said. "We owe it to the operational force to bring (the signal soldiers) back and give them a 'check ride.'"

Calling Fort Hood's signal soldiers "motivated and professional," Bouchard said his three-day visit to Fort Hood was beneficial as he was able to gather ideas to help make the signal transformation even more relevant to the nation's soldiers.

"This is a very, very busy time in our Army's history and, fortunately, our soldiers are accomplishing their missions very, very well," Bouchard said.

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